



ship between the environment and humanity. Our use of carbon-based fuels is hastening global warming via the greenhouse effect, creating climate chaos — increasing the intensity of climate events. No one can say that any one discrete event, such as Hurricane Irene or the Texas drought and wildfires, is due solely to human-induced global warming, but few can deny that we are profoundly impacting our natural environment. We have always had hurricanes and drought, but the intensities and frequencies of each are definitely increasing. Last year was the warmest year in recorded history and the Arctic ice is at record low levels — not natural trends, but trends resting on the logic of human-induced global warming through our continued use of fossil fuels.

Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” although probably not responsible for this August’s Virginia earthquake, is quite possibly linked to small quakes that have occurred elsewhere. Our quest for more fossil fuels is dangerously misplaced, as is our continued use of nuclear power, itself far from being a carbon-neutral technology.

I hope to present some of these issues in more detail in future columns, and hopefully create and foster a dialogue in search of solutions to these very real problems that confront all of us and threaten the natural world we, as committed environmentalists, love so much.

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### BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrder II

This month I’m reviewing a classic (I think) — *The Big Year* by Mark Obmascik. It’s one of the wackiest bird competitions around; that would be the Big Year. And this is a narrative about the North American Big Year! Anyway, each birder spends 365 days racing around North America (continental U.S. and Canada). How many bird species can they see? They compile lists of birds for the ABA (American Birding Association) to be recognized as the winner!

This is a very entertaining book that Mark has written. His narrative tells the tale of three men, the top contenders of the 1998 Big Year. His narrative is based on post-competition interviews and weaves a story of intrigue mixed with humor. Mark follows each of these men as they freewheel their way, crisscrossing the continent in search of both easy and hard-to-find birds. You will knowingly chuckle as you recognize birder friends who could fit this mold. He writes in a lighthearted style that moves around as fast as these birders. All the while, Mark keeps us spellbound and guessing where this will all end on Dec. 31. These birders’ drive to win pushed them over the 700 species threshold, and with a blend of humor and awe Mark will keep your nose glued to these pages.

OK, so you don’t want to read over 250 pages? So, the movie is being released in October. See it, instead. Better yet, READ the book in addition. You will NOT be disappointed!!



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Library from 7:30–9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month (third Tuesday this November) to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment’s health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

- Baldwin ..... Jane Brody, Linda Gersch
- East Meadow ..... Peter Dorniak, Mr. & Mrs. Henry T. Piccoli, Malinda Posillico
- Elmont ..... Calvin Kaintuck
- Farmingdale ..... Barbara Bangs, Mario Castiglia, Carol Jacob
- Floral Park ..... Steven Kaiser, Joseph McGlyn
- Franklin Square ..... Mia L. Helling
- Freeport ..... Ronald Michlow
- Garden City ..... Michael Briganti, Marion Mullahey
- Glen Oaks ..... Msgr. Raymond F. Chappetto
- Hewlett ..... Lisa Alper
- Hicksville ..... Adam Blank, V. Calabro, Patricia Carrabis, Cornelia Catera, Melissa Ronsiek
- Island Park ..... Frances Klein
- Levittown ..... Cathy Barreiro, Richard Carlson, Alan Davidson, Kathleen O’Callaghan, Peter Pantelis, Anneliese Seemann
- Long Beach ..... Laura C. Hummel, Eileen Littlefield, Florence Parlakian
- Malverne ..... Josephine Taliercio
- Massapequa ..... Joan Bier
- Massapequa Park ..... Carol Kennaugh
- Merrick ..... George A. Carman, Lawrence Carolan
- Oceanside ..... Bernice Lebek, Josephine Williams
- Old Bethpage ..... Mary Stadler
- Plainview ..... Karen Jordan
- Rockville Centre ..... Lois D. Blumenfeld
- Seaford ..... Roberta Lutzw
- Uniondale ..... Ann Oon
- Valley Stream ..... Colleen Richards
- Wantagh ..... Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Pernice



## NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Two Adirondack Lakes – Two Loon Stories

Joe Grupp

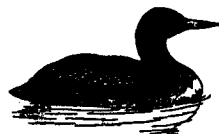
*Story One.* The canoe rested on the shore of a small lake, near Lake Placid in the Adirondacks. Waiting by it were two of my middle-school-aged grandsons who were about to learn how to paddle from the stern seat of the canoe without dipping the paddle in the water first on one side of the boat, then the other. The person paddling in the stern has most of the control over the canoe's direction of travel. The technique is not easy to master when first trying to paddle in a reasonably straight line from point to point.

One of my favorite mantras when canoeing with others is: "If you want to canoe, you have to be willing to carry." Willing they were, as the three of us had carried the canoe from the car's roof, a fair distance to the lake's edge. I was returning from parking the car when I got a hurry-up wave from the boys as they quietly mouthed, "LOON!" Moving as unobtrusively as possible, I reached the boys and we stood by the canoe, gazing at a Common Loon that was close enough to us that we could see its details without binoculars.

The bird was alert to our presence as we whispered about the breeding plumage characteristics that, one by one, we observed. Evident in detail were the bird's black-barred white necklace located low on the throat, the black-and-white checkered pattern on wings and back, the heavy pointed bill, the dark black head, and the alert eye that was watching us. All of a sudden, the bird dove under the surface of the water and after a time popped back up again close to its original position. After a pause it did so again. It most likely was feeding, because when loons dive while feeling threatened they usually surface a good, sometimes unbelievable, distance away from where they dove.

Common Loons need a fairly long "runway" along the water's surface before gaining enough speed to take off, and then they gain altitude slowly. Our bird gave us a perfect observation of those facts when we moved and it decided it was time to leave. Beating its wings vigorously, it gained speed as it traveled in a direction diagonally across the small lake, and its body finally lifted out of the water while its feet, one by one, were still touching it. It appeared as if the bird was running across the water's surface. Each "footstep" caused a splash but added to the bird's speed as each webbed foot pushed against the water, in much the same manner as our paddling would push us forward when we finally canoed.

Splash, splash, splash, splash, and eventually the bird was airborne. Near the far forested shore it banked, turning to follow the lake's shoreline while slowly gaining altitude. Passing near us the first time, it was not far over our heads as it lapped the pond. We counted the number of times the bird lapped the pond as it gained altitude. During the



fourth lap it was high enough to slip over the trees and head to another lake, who knows where?

The boys did quite well as they began to learn their new paddling technique. We finished our paddling in a light drizzle, lugged the canoe and secured it to the top of the car, and headed back to our campsite. Sitting under the tarp, at camp, the conversation focused on our paddling adventure and was just as much or more about the loon as it was about the paddling.

Story Two will be in the next issue of the *Skimmer*.

### CIRCLE THE DATE

Therese Lucas

Circle the date — any date that's important to you — on your Audubon 2012 calendar. The calendars will be available to purchase beginning in October at meetings and walks at a discounted cost. Standard calendars and some engagement style will be included. The very popular Songbirds along with National Parks, Butterflies, and Wildflowers will be among the assortment.

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### SSAS HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Joe Landesberg

The recipients of our annual high school awards in June were as follows:

- Michelle Evans from Baldwin Senior High School
  - Milagros Rodriguez from Freeport High School
  - Ben Kutner from South Side H.S. in Rockville Centre
- All are college bound, hoping to make science history.

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OUR E-LIST [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas\\_list](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list)

**SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS**

*Betsy Gulotta*

As announced at our annual dinner this past June, the 2011 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarship winners were Caitlin M. Dean and Stephanie Jurburg, both from Columbia University.

Caitlin, graduating in 2012, is majoring in ecology, evolution, and environmental biology. She is doing research in avian ecology in neotropical countries, especially Nicaragua where she has studied avian malaria and parasites in Nicaraguan wrens. She is involved in a collaborative study between Barnard College and the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua on biodiversity, rural livelihoods, and coffee as an economically and ecologically sustainable crop. She will measure avian

biodiversity in coffee plantations, sample for malaria, and interview local farmers to evaluate management practices to promote conservation of birds in shade coffee plantations. She is using her scholarship money to travel to Nicaragua and for her room and board there.

Stephanie, also graduating in 2012, also majors in ecology, evolution, and environmental biology, concentrating in environmental science. She has studied soil quality in coffee plantations in Nicaragua, assessing microbial communities in shade coffee plantations to determine ecosystem diversity and health. Nicaragua promotes shade-grown coffee in areas of high biodiversity, but uses a variety of methods. Her study will help determine the best methods to maintain biodiversity. She is using the scholarship money for travel and scientific research materials.



**EPCAL UPDATE**

Four years ago, SSAS joined the other six Long Island Audubon Council chapters and Audubon New York as members of the Coalition to Save Open Space at EPCAL. The Town of Riverhead continues to develop the nearly 3000-acre former Grumman property now known as Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL). The property includes 800 acres of grasslands known to be one of the last LI breeding locations and wintering strongholds for Eastern Meadowlarks, as well as habitat for NY state-endangered Short-eared Owls and Eastern tiger salamanders.

In late August, SSAS and other Coalition members endorsed the letter that's excerpted below, which due to time constraints had immediately been sent by Group for the East End to Kevin P. Walsh, P.E., Regional Director of Land Development for VHB, the consultants hired by the Town of Riverhead. Here are portions of the six-page letter:

Dear Mr. Walsh:

I write on behalf of Group for the East End to provide you with preliminary comments on the updated land use

plan for the EPCAL property in Calverton. Given the early stages of this present land use plan, the following comments are necessarily general in nature, but we believe they do provide a suitable overview of our primary community planning, sustainability, and conservation concerns for the future development of the subject property.

The updated land use assessment for the EPCAL property should seek to confine future development to the smallest possible "footprint" on the overall property, and encourage uses that can conform to this site-development goal.

In our view, a compact and innovative design strategy could offer substantial short- and long-term mitigation for otherwise unavoidable environmental impacts associated with habitat loss, site disturbance, erosion, sedimentation, stormwater runoff, changing community character, reductions in groundwater recharge, potential groundwater contamination, energy demand, water consumption, noise generation, light pollution, traffic congestion, and solid waste production.

In addition to the development of a consolidated design for new construction, we strongly recommend that future development areas be selected to maximize their proximity to already-developed and utilized space on the property. This integrated design goal should improve the potential for use of existing site infrastructure, and minimize the intrusion of new development on natural and undeveloped areas of the site.

A zero net energy goal for each new building should be promoted and incorporated into the long-term site plan or lease approval process for development of the EPCAL site.

As Suffolk County remains a non-attainment area for air pollution, the proposed development plan for the Enterprise Park should examine the potential implications that site development will have on the region's air quality.

Mitigation measures ranging from the incorporation of mass transit options for workers, to the incorporation of energy efficiency and onsite renewable energy system development, to the dedication of natural areas on the EPCAL site, should all be evaluated in terms of their value as a mitigation measure for anticipated air quality impacts associated with site development and long-term operation.

The protection of water quality beneath the site should be a priority for the life of the project. While we understand that some groundwater contamination has already occurred on this property, the site's proximity to the Peconic River underscores the importance of making every effort to minimize the potential for new groundwater contamination in the future... The study should also provide an updated status report on groundwater remediation that is currently underway on and around the property.

We understand that some consideration has been given to relocating the facility's wastewater discharge to remove it from the Peconic River watershed. We support further consideration of this option as part of the overall waste-

water assessment, but obviously such relocation must also be reviewed in concert with a careful understanding and analysis of the potential implications of redirecting treated effluent into the Long Island Sound watershed. As with other aspects of the project, we encourage your consideration of innovative wastewater technology such as that which is increasingly used in solar aquatic sewage treatment plants. Such plants require less energy, less chemical additives, have fewer mechanical components, and reduce the costs of operation over time.

The updated land use plan should include a detailed four-season natural areas assessment, which identifies the site's natural communities (cover types) and provides a detailed floral and faunal species inventory for each community. As part of this assessment, we recommend that VHB consider engaging the New York State Natural Heritage Program, which is a widely recognized leader in the development of species inventories throughout the State of New York.

Because of the unique abundance of contiguous grassland habitat on the site, we strongly recommend that the updated land use plan be developed to include a specific grassland habitat assessment and long-term management and stewardship strategy. The strategy should seek to keep as much of this habitat intact as possible, and engage the services of local experts to help maintain and regularly inventory the site's grassland habitat over time. Preserved grasslands should be afforded appropriate buffers between active human development and the grassland environment.

In terms of data collection, we note that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) has already established a survey protocol for breeding grassland birds at the EPCAL site. We have enclosed a copy of this protocol for your review and strongly recommend that this protocol be employed as part of the overall species inventory.

In the course of prior reviews associated with the development of the EPCAL property, the Coalition for the Preservation of Open Space at EPCAL has provided the Town of Riverhead with an extensive amount of information pertaining to the established records of numerous "listed species" that make use of this property. For your information, attached to this letter, please find the following documents, which we ask you to review and incorporate into your work on the revised land use plan for EPCAL:

1. "EPCAL's Grassland Birds: Species Accounts, Habitat Preservation Requirements, and Buffer Requirements" (2009).

2. "EPCAL Herpetofauna and Avifauna Inventory" (2008).

Although the site's grassland habitat is clearly one of the most significant natural features on the EPCAL site, it is not the site's only natural asset. As a result, we urge VHB to develop an overall conservation strategy for the EPCAL site that provides the highest level of protection for contiguous natural areas in a way that best protects the site's grasslands and pine barrens within the Peconic River watershed.

From our vantage point, efforts to preserve the site's grassland habitat and its related species are priority conservation concerns that will also provide substantial mitigation for many other short- and long-term related impacts associated with site development. As a result, we do not perceive substantial grassland habitat preservation as presumptively incompatible with a reasonable development plan for the EPCAL property.

The updated land use plan for EPCAL should provide ample opportunity for community education, participation, regular input, and feedback as it is being developed.

Over the course of the next few months, we strongly recommend that the Town of Riverhead develop a Citizens Advisory Board to work with VHB in reviewing the ongoing development of the land use plan.

Given the complexity and size of the EPCAL parcel, it will be nearly impossible for community members to provide useful and substantive input after the entire plan is essentially complete. Moreover, we suspect that public concern raised over the last development proposal will heighten public interest in being part of the dialogue from the outset of the current land use plan.

We look forward to providing you with additional information and participating in the updated land use plan as it begins to take shape. Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns. — Robert S. DeLuca, President

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All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and summaries may be found at [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org).

- Sep. 25 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Oct. 2 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Oct. 9 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Oct. 16 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Oct. 23 Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
- Oct. 30 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Nov. 6 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Nov. 13 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)

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RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

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VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (631) 423-0982

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### THIRD TUESDAY IN NOVEMBER

Our general meeting in November will be delayed a week due to Election Day, when the library will be closed. We're scheduled to meet on **Tuesday, November 15**. Please mark your calendars.





